A TRACT FOR THE TIMES,

ON THE QUESTION,

IS IT RIGHT TO WITHHOLD FELLOWSHIP FROM CHURCHES OR FROM INDIVIDUALS THAT TOLERATE OR PRACTISE SLAVERY?

READ BY APPOINTMENT, BEFORE

THE CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS' MEETING,

OF NEW-LONDON COUNTY, CT.

BY

REV. HENRY T. CHEEVER.

This is true liberty, when free-born men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free.

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"If these little sparks of holy fire which I have heaped together, do not give life to your prepared and already enkindled spirit, yet they will sometime help to entertain a thought or actuate a passion."—Bishop Taylor.

A TRACT.

BY REV. HENRY T. CHEEVER.

Is it right to withhold fellowship from churches or from individuals that tolerate or practise slavery?

THE settlement of this question depends upon the answers we allow to three other questions: First, Is the tolerating or practising of sin sufficient ground for withholding church-fellowship in any case? Second, Is slavery or slaveholding sin? Third, What is meant by withholding church-fellowship? and what ends are to be answered by it?

I. Is the tolerating or practising of sin sufficient ground for withholding church-fellowship in any case?

Our answer to this question must be, that there are two grounds asserted in the word of God, on which we are not only justified, but required to withhold fellowship: first, important doctrinal errors; second, sinful practices.

In regard to the first as a reason for withholding fellowship, Paul says, in the Epistle to the Romans, 16 : 17, Mark them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid* them. Again, in 1 Tim. 6 : 3, 5, If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, *from such withdraw thyself.* In the second Epistle of John, 10 : 11, it is said, If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, *receive him not into your house*, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed, *is partaker of his evil deeds.*

Here, then, the teaching and entertaining of *doctrines* contrary to the Gospel, are implied and declared to be a sufficient reason for not merely withholding, but for positively withdrawing fellowship and countenance.

In regard to the second scriptural ground for withholding fellowship, namely, sinful practices, we find Paul saying, 1 Cor. 5 : 11,

I have written unto you, *not to keep company*, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no, not to eat. And in 2 Thess. 3 : 6, 14, 15 : Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly*. And if any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man, and *have no company with him*, THAT HE MAY BE ASHAMED. Yet count him not as an enemy, but *admonish him as a brother*. The Apostle's directions also to Timothy for dealing with sinners is, 1 Tim. 5 : 20 : Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear. And to the same import is one of the rules of Jehovah, among the solemn precepts of moral conduct to his ancient covenant people, Lev. 19 : 17 : Thou shalt in ANY WISE REBUKE THY NEIGHBOR, and not suffer sin upon him.

No one will deny that on the express authority of these passages, as well as on the ground of general principles, it is not only right, but it is a duty, *to withhold fellowship from those that either entertain fundamental doctrinal errors, or persist in a sinful practice*. It is God's own way for his people to express their disapproval of a brother's errors in doctrine or practice, or in both. It is, therefore, right, and we are bound to maintain it as a principle, the withholding of fellowship from errorists and wrong-doers, whether they be in the household of faith or not.

II. The second question is, Does Slavery involve either doctrinal error, or sinful practice, or both, so as to be a ground for the withholding of fellowship from those who tolerate or practise it?

It does involve both. Its doctrinal error, its wrongfulness as a principle, is what Lord Brougham called "the wild and guilty fantasy that man can hold property in man"—the principle of human chattelhood, that immortal man may be bought and sold—or, in the language of the American Slave Code itself, defining Slavery, (Stroud's Sketch of the Laws of Slavery,) "Slaves are to be deemed, sold, taken, reputed, and adjudged in law to be chattels personal, in the hands of their owners and possessors, and to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatever."

This, then, is the character, this is the quality of American Slavery; and this makes its offense so rank it smells to heaven—that it chattelizes immortal man. It appropriates and uses him, his personality, himself, as a thing, or as an irrational beast of burden. Not that it merely appropriates and uses the *services of the slave* —a phraseology with which many persons are found blinding themselves to the nature of slavery—but it seizes, secures, and

claims ownership in the slave himself. It deems, sells, takes, reputes, and adjudges in law to be a chattel personal, "*the slave and its increase.*" It dehumanizes, so to speak, human nature itself; it unmans man, and holds him as a brute and his increase, designating such alleged property by these very terms, "*the slave and its increase.*"

This is the basis-principle of American Slavery, maintained in law, and practically governing all legal decisions in regard to it, that the slave is a thing, a chattel personal, from which naturally follows the comprehensive judgment of our Supreme Court in the interest of slavery, that no negro, or descendant of a negro, can be a citizen of the United States, and the correlate opinion that the black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect. Of course he has no rights as a man if he is no man—if he is only a brute or a thing—if he is to be deemed, sold, taken, reputed, and adjudged, in law to be a chattel personal in the hands of its owner and possessor, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatever, the slave and *its increase.*

This is the doctrinal error at the root of slavery—that property may be held in man. Herein lies its abstract wrongfulness. It is an abstract falsehood, a great doctrinal lie, for God, our great proprietor, never gave men property in man. He did give them property and dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. But he never gave property in man, and we can hold no property in any thing for which we have not a grant from God and nature.

The right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the acquisition of property in the earth, sea, air, and all their products, is an inalienable right of human nature. None *with* a human nature are *without that right* from nature's God. But, on the other hand, no law, or ordinance of man, or custom of antiquity, can confer the right of property in human nature itself. And it is one of the greatest enormities and crimes that can possibly be perpetrated, to use a man as mon But this is what American Slavery does in theory and practice, and this makes it "the sum of all villainies." And it is by reason of this, its doctrinal error, its evil principle, that it is both a right and a duty to withhold Christian fellowship from those who assert it, in themselves practising or tolerating slavery.

2. But, in the second place, slavery is not only wrong in *principle*, so that by authority of the word of God, we should withhold fellowship from it and from its defenders, but it is wrong in

practice, so as to cover both of the Scripture requisitions in regard to fellowship? Slavery is not merely an abstract error, but it is a concrete sin. It is a positive outrage upon human nature itself; and it is the greatest wrong that can be committed against humanity, to enslave A MAN, whether that enslavement be from birth, or by purchase, or by actual violence and kidnapping. It is a violence to human nature either way, and it is an insult to nature's God, and to the impartial Saviour of mankind, who puts himself in the place of the meanest of the human brotherhood, and says emphatically, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Freedom is man's right from God the Creator; and to put him out of that right by first enslaving him, or by keeping him in the state of slavery when already enslaved, is a sin against God and against man. And for this reason, therefore, because slavery is a sinful practice, as well as a wrong principle, we are bound to withhold fellowship from churches and from individuals that practise or tolerate it.

III. We are now prepared for the question: What ends are to be answered by withholding church fellowship on account of slavery? and what is meant by it? I answer, that the withholding of church fellowship is always meant as a testimony against error and sin, in doctrine or practice, or both. And its design is to reprove, convince, recover, and bring to repentance the wrong-thinker and the wrong-doer. The end to be answered by it in regard to slavery, is the extinction of that grievous wrong and sin. Our warrant for it is the word of God: Eph. 5 : 11: Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them: And 1 Tim. 5 : 20: Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear. Lev. 19 : 17: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

The withholding of fellowship from the sinner is both the natural and the revealed mode of testifying against sin. It is a divine precept (1 Tim. 5 : 22) *not to be partakers of other men's sins.* But if we let other men's sins go without reproof, and still hold fellowship with them when we ourselves are aware of their wrong principle and wrong practice, what are we but partakers in the same? The command from heaven in regard to the apostate Church of Rome (Rev. 18 : 4) applies also to every apostate and erring church or individual with whom we have to do.

Now, the American Church South has plainly become apostate (it has departed from the faith) upon the great question and sin

of slavery. For, whereas the leading Presbyterian divines formerly held and affirmed slavery to be a sin, and the Book of Confession and of Discipline made it an offense to be proceeded against, now they affirm, (to use the very language of one of them,) "That slavery is one of the social relations of men, ordained of God. It is like husband and wife, parent and child, teacher and scholar, magistrate and citizen, captain and soldier, sovereign and people."

And whereas the Presbyterian Book of Faith and Discipline once expressly condemned slavery, and declared it forbidden by the word of God, now that testimony is left out in the printed Confession.*

And whereas statesmen and ministers of the Gospel, at the time of the Revolution and for years after, held slavery to be a great wrong, and, in the language of one of them, (Patrick Henry,) maintained "that it is a debt which we owe to the purity of our religion, to show that it is at variance with the law which warrants slavery"—now, both statesmen and divines of the South uphold slavery, and defend it from the sacred Scriptures, asserting boldly that slavery is the true condition of the black man, and mastership that of the white man.†

* In the year 1794, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States adopted this note, in their Confession of Faith, to the one hundred and forty-second question in the larger Catechism on the Eighth Commandment: "1 Tim. 1 : 10. *The law is made for man-stealers.* This crime, among the Jews, exposed the perpetrators of it to capital punishment, (Ex. 21 : 16;) and the Apostle here classes them with sinners of the first rank. The word he uses, in its original import comprehends all who are concerned in bringing any of the human race into slavery, or *retaining them in it. Hominum fures, qui servos vel liberos abducunt, retinent, vendent, vel emunt;* stealers of men are those who bring off slaves or freemen, and *keep, sell, or buy them.* To steal a freeman, says Grotius, is the highest kind of theft. In other instances, we only steal property; but when we steal or *retain men in slavery*, we seize those who, in common with ourselves, are constituted by the original grant, lords of the earth.—Gen. 1 : 28; vide Poli Synopsin in loc."

† Formerly judicial decisions tended to the freedom and elevation of the black man: now it is held that his chatteldom so far prevails over his personality, that he can not exercise the right of choosing freedom, even when tendered him by his master. Once, wills of emancipation were favored in the South: now they are under the ban of law.

And that we do not misrepresent the sentiment of the Southern Church, as gathered from the utterances of its representative men and periodicals, we quote the following from the pen of Rev. Dr. Adger in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*: "Whatever may be true or false of other nations generally—whatever of other Africans—as concerns those Africans who live among us, they are *justly held by us in bondage.* Towards them we have duties, over them we have rights. The

And whereas, even as late as the year 1834, only one year after the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society on the foundation-principle that slavery is sin and should therefore be immediately abandoned, Rev. R. J. Breckenridge, of Kentucky, declared: "I believe, and have long and repeatedly maintained, that slavery is a sin to him who in any way supports it. In 1833, I did refuse to sit as a corresponding member of the Synod of Kentucky, after that body refused to say that God's law condemned slavery. To put an end to slavery, we are bound to use legal means where they exist, and *moral means always*"—Now, on the other hand, in the year of grace 1858, it is very generally held throughout the Southern Church, by its laity and ministry, that slavery is no sin, and that it is not a matter for ecclesiastical judgment or action.

And whereas the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States was founded, according to Mr. Lee, the historian of that body, with a number of express rules which stipulated that slavery should not be maintained in the Church; and by a clause added to Mr. Wesley's original rules, expressly forbade "the buying or selling the souls and bodies of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them," and declared in these words "that no person holding slaves shall be admitted to our society, till he previously comply with these rules concerning slavery"—whereas this was the sense and rule of that Church from the year 1780, it has now, in the year 1858, so far apostatized from the faith of its fathers and founders on this subject, that the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at its late session in Nashville, expunged from the Book of Discipline all reference to the subject of buying and selling slaves, by a vote of one hundred and forty ayes to eight noes, in the following resolution: "Re-

existing relation between the white and the black man in these Southern States, is a necessary and a just and a good relation.

It is the best form of society possible amongst us. It is good not only for us, but good for them. The relation itself is the very best possible for both the races, thus strangely brought together in God's mysterious providence. Existing as they do in the midst of us, the end of this relation would necessarily be the end of all their wonderful progress—the beginning of their retrogression very rapidly into the barbarism out of which we have been God's agents in partly reclaiming them. And existing as they do in the midst of us, the end of this relation would be the end of all ability on our or their part to dwell peaceably together. Therefore the relation is good. And born under it, we and they both like it; and under it, all things taken into view, we and they constitute together perhaps the happiest people in the whole world. Such we conceive to be the position which the South takes."—*Southern Presbyterian Review*, 1858.

solved, By the delegates of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in General Conference assembled, that the rule forbidding the buying and selling of men, women, and children, with the intention to enslave them, be expunged from the General Rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South."

Without entering particularly into an exhibit of the complicity with slavery of the Baptist and Episcopal Churches, it is enough to say, these facts fairly present the great apostasy* of the

* It has surprised many that such large numbers of slaveholders should have changed so radically their ground within the last twenty-five years. Previous to this time, the system of slavery was generally admitted by Southern men as an unnatural, abnormal, undesirable state of things, to be remedied as soon as circumstances would allow. *Now* it is very generally claimed to be a system justified by sound policy and right reason, indorsed by conscience, sanctified by the Bible, and worthy of a permanent existence and general approbation. How has this great change in public sentiment at the South been brought about? Perhaps we can throw some light on this subject. We will make the effort.

In the year 1833, the Presbytery of Chillicothe, Ohio, adopted a strong paper, reprobating the system of slavery, and setting forth its intrinsic, inherent, and inexcusable wrongs. A copy was sent to the Stated Clerk of the Synod of Mississippi, embracing at that time the States of Mississippi, Louisiana, and South-Alabama. At the meeting of the Synod in the fall of 1834, at Port Gibson, in the church of which Rev. Zebulon Butler, D.D., was then and still is the pastor, Rev. James Smiley preached the opening sermon, in which he argued the righteousness of slavery from the Bible. The sermon was strongly condemned by the leading members of the Synod, as containing false and unscriptural views. Many intelligent men belonging to the congregation, who were slaveholders, joined in expressions of condemnation of the new doctrine. Some went so far as to say that Mr Smiley ought not to be permitted to preach. The same sermon was preached a few weeks afterwards at Oakland College, in the church of which Rev. Mr. Chamberlin, the President of the College, was the stated supply. Dr. Chamberlin expressed his strong dissent to the views advanced, and many in the congregation, made up chiefly of wealthy planters, were greatly displeased. Mr. Daniels, owner of several hundred slaves, said to Dr. Chamberlin at the door: "We hold you responsible for what comes from that pulpit—you are placed there to guard it—why do you permit such sentiments to be preached? We are all anxious enough to get plantations and negroes, without slandering the Holy Ghost by claiming the Bible justifies slavery."

This was the beginning of Bible slavery in this country. The year after, Mr. Smiley amplified his sermon into a book, now famous as "Smiley on Slavery." When his book was first published, his brethren of the Mississippi Synod were dissatisfied with it, and gave it no countenance. The leading bookseller in Natchez refused to receive it on sale, and Mr. Smiley excited some odium against him by calling him an Abolitionist. A copy of the book found its way to the reading-room of a prominent hotel in New-Orleans. Several persons were discussing its merits, when one remarked, that "it was singular that a man of Mr. Smiley's good sense and scholarship could not see that he was wrong." A shrewd lawyer sitting by, replied that Mr. Smiley could not see his error, because he had *twenty-five thousand dollars* lying upon each eyelid. Mr. Smiley, in the early part of his ministry

Southern Church in regard to slavery. The change in laws and legal decisions, which formerly went very far in construing deeds and wills of emancipation in favor of granting liberty to the slave, but now deny to the slave any civil or social right whatever, so as to make it impossible for him to choose liberty, although the choice be left him by will of his master, I will not notice.* Nor will I enlarge upon the recent anti-Christian charge of a United States Judge (Leavitt) at Cincinnati, in the case of Conolly, "that Christian charity was not within the meaning or intent of the Fugitive Slave Law, and Christian charity would not therefore answer as a defense for violating the law."

Who now shall testify against this apostasy, and reprove our brethren in the South on account of it, if the churches at the North hold their peace? The apostasy is clear; the departure from the faith of the fathers is undeniable. The change† in the

was strongly opposed to slavery. At the age of thirty-eight he lost his wife. By a second marriage he came into possession of slave property. For months he was exceedingly disturbed by the possession of this property. He said to a clerical friend, that the "matter distressed him exceedingly." At length he mastered his scruples, and arrived at the conclusion that slavery is a divine institution. To Dr. Smiley belongs the honor, or dishonor, of first indorsing and defending slavery from the Bible. Rev. Dr. Fuller, an eminent Baptist clergyman, then of Charleston, South-Carolina, next followed; then Dr. William Winans, of the Methodist Church; *then, and not till then*, politicians chimed in, and made the welkin ring with the "God-ward side" of slavery.

We think these facts should be preserved for future reference, and hence we have taken some pains to get them in an accurate and reliable form.—*Traveller.*

* The Supreme Judicial Tribunal of Virginia has lately decided, in the case of the will of James L. Poindexter emancipating his slaves, and the decision is rendered by Judge Daniel: "That slaves have no civil or social rights, and that the slave can not choose between freedom and slavery, if the offer be made him by his master; and that consequently a slave left by his master with freedom if he choose to take it, can have no legal right to choose freedom, and must therefore still be a slave."

† The greatness of the change at the South in favor of Slavery, astonishes all who have watched its progress. The New-Orleans *Picayune* has the following, which is cited as the strongest act ever passed by the Louisiana Legislature:

"*An Act to prohibit the Emancipation of Slaves.*

"SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, in General Assembly convened, That from and after the passage of this Act, no slave shall be emancipated in this State.

"Approved, March 6th, 1857."

The despotism of Slavery, it will thus be seen, becomes more oppressive from year to year. No slave, however worthy, can henceforth in Louisiana (and Virginia is fast advancing in the same road) have the boon of freedom. The slaveholder, too, is fettered in the use of his property. However ardent his desire to

attitude and tone of the Southern Church toward slavery is manifest to all the world. But what we call apostasy, they call progress.

Is not, then, the most solemn testimony possible in regard to it, demanded of us? And what expression so solemn and affecting as the withholding of church-fellowship from those who are in this apostasy?

But the right to remonstrate and withhold fellowship on account of this apostasy in doctrine and practice being admitted, a question arises in some minds, Is it expedient to exercise that right? Would it be productive of good? We answer, first, that in the true view of expediency, it is always expedient to do right. Moreover, the exercise of the right of rebuke to our neighbor is not left optional in the word of God, but is expressly required in that authoritative precept, Thou shalt in *any wise* rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Whatever may be the presumptive effect of the rebuke, we are in any wise to give it, and to acquit ourselves of the duty, in the fear of God.

confer liberty on a deserving slave, the law steps in and forbids the act. And yet such States claim to be civilized and Christian!

By many the change is attributed to the anti-slavery agitation at the North. Now, mischievous as Abolitionism has been, those who make the new pro-slavery propagandism of the South a mere reaction from this, and maintain that but for it, Kentucky, Virginia, and perhaps other States, would ere this have adopted an emancipation policy, do Abolitionism more honor, as a power, than belongs to it. Abolition Societies existed from the first formation of our Government. Benjamin Franklin was President of one in Pennsylvania. The eminent and conservative Judge Baldwin was Secretary of one in Connecticut. More potent causes than either Garrisonianism or the deep Christian opposition to Slavery which manifests itself at the North, have brought about the sad apostasy of the South on the question of human freedom.

The naming, by others, of the most influential of those causes, is often received with incredulity, and even with ridicule, by men who profess the highest admiration for the conservatism of Daniel Webster in the last years of his public career. But in his much-lauded speech of March 7th, 1850, in the Senate of the United States, Mr. Webster used the following language:

"What, then, have been the causes which have created so new a feeling in favor of Slavery in the South, which have changed the nomenclature of the South on that subject, so that from being thought and described as I have mentioned and will not repeat, it has now become an institution, a cherished institution, in that quarter—no evil, no scourge, but a great religious, social, and moral blessing, as I think I have heard it latterly spoken of? I suppose this, sir, is owing to the sudden uprising and rapid growth of COTTON plantations of the South. So far as any motive consistent with honor, justice, and general judgment could act, it was the COTTON interest that gave a new desire to promote Slavery, to spread it, to use its labor."

But what is the rational presumption in regard to the effect of such an admonition? To this we answer: It is certain that it would be productive of good in one way, and there is every reason to believe that such a testimony would do good in another way. Its certain good would be this, that it would be the unselfish, disinterested witness and rebuke, from principle and conscience, against evil. And this, in a world of mingled and warring good and evil, must be a benefit. The simple affirmation of the truth, the clear utterance of a principle, the mere positive declaration of abstract right, and the honest expression of abhorrence of wrong, from any quarter, but especially from any portion of the Christian Church, is a power in the world. It is a blow felt through all the kingdom of darkness, and hence its recoil. Hence the madness evinced in the South at the assertion of the abstract principle that slavery is sin. A principle thrown out upon the world, whether it be right or wrong, is a power, because it is always productive of good or of evil. It has what Lord Bacon calls a seminal virtue and potency; it contains in itself an endless power of semination. Human conduct grows out of principle, and principles shape and forecast facts. Principle it is that governs practice, right or wrong. The evil principle at the bottom of slavery, of property in man, governs in every actual case of slaveholding, and slavery knows that it can stand only so far as its principle is admitted, that it must fall when that is denied. Now, good men are satisfied that right principles will in the end prevail over wrong principles in this world, because God and his providence are on the side of the right and the true. It is therefore never useless or inexpedient to declare such principles as a testimony. This, then, is the certain good that would follow from our testifying against slavery, by withholding fellowship from churches and individuals that practise or tolerate it—it would be a standing testimony to the truth and the right, and against falsehood and wrong.

2. But in the second place, there is reason to believe that such a testimony would do good in another way. It would be likely to convince our Southern brethren of one thing at least, that we are earnest and sincere, and based upon principle in our opposition to slavery. Let us, as ministers and churches, conscientiously withhold fellowship from those who practise and defend slavery, and let us make it known that we have no fellowship with them but to reprove them in all suitable ways, and there can hardly be a doubt that it would touch and trouble the Southern conscience. Such a standing remonstrance against their cherished iniquity

amid the solemnities of the sanctuary and at the communion table, could not but be felt.

But how is it now? Christians at the South that have fallen into the great Southern apostasy on the subject of slavery, do not believe that Christians at the North really hold them to be cherishing a great sin and wrong both in principle and practice. They know that an agitating and active minority in the ministry, whom they call ultra and fanatical, think so. But they are satisfied as yet that a large preponderance of the staid, conservative Christianity of the North is on their side. Their deceiving oracles teach them so—the *Journal of Commerce* their Law—the *New-York Observer* their Gospel. And they naturally refer to the late action of the Tract Society, and to the very general silence of the churches as churches upon the question of slavery, in proof of their position. They rationally argue that there can not be any deep-seated and general abhorrence of slavery upon principle, as a sin, where the churches not only refrain from rebuking it, but still proffer their fellowship to those who sustain it, by maintaining a correspondence with their ecclesiastical bodies, and by inviting slaveholding ministers into our pulpits, and slaveholders to our communion-tables.

But now let these signs of fellowship be generally withheld, and the reason for it be given with plainness and fidelity—let the ministry take and make all suitable occasions to express the convictions of Northern Christians in reference to slavery—let them pour upon it the revealing light of God's word—and let them evince a hearty remembrance and perpetual sympathy with them that are in bonds as bound with them, so that all shall know it who hear them preach or pray; and how long could this inhuman and anti-Christian institution stand such an assault? How long would it be before that insurrection of Southern consciences would take place, which General Duff Green deprecated twenty-five years ago? In this view it is no slander to say, that the Church in this country is the great bulwark of American Slavery.* And when the support which the Church now gives to this relic of barbarism shall be withdrawn, by withholding fellowship from slaveholders, the iniquity will fall by its own weight of evil, or it will expire by suicide under the opprobium of mankind.

But it is objected by some one to this reasoning and to these

* "There is no power out of the Church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it. Let every religious denomination *detach itself from all connection with slavery, and utter a calm and deliberate voice to the world, and the work will be done.*"—Rev. Albert Barnes.

results: You argue as if the truth all lay on one side, when as good or better men and Christians than you, are practising slavery; and clearer and stronger heads than yours defend it out of the Scriptures as an institution of God. To this I answer: Are we so miserably deficient in steadfast principle? and is it so hard to be certain we are right on a simple question of morals, that we are to be staggered in our convictions, or to be made timid and hesitating in the expression of them, by the array of names, and virtues, and piety on the side of wrong? Is the sophistry or speculation of all evangelical Christendom upon what is calculated to receive its approbation, to keep me from arriving at certainty upon a simple question of human rights, and the requisition of God's law? Am I to be befogged and doubtful and non-committal upon the subject of slavery, and the duty of having no fellowship therewith but to reprove it, because greater minds than mine are entangled in the web of their own sophisms, and blinded with the very ink which they have shed, like the cuttle-fish, to keep off their pursuers? No, the truth is not always on the side of the heaviest artillery, or the hugest cotton-bale, or the blackest ink, or the most pious Jesuitism; and you and I may be right, and we may know it, though Socrates and Plato, and the Man of Ross be on the other side. And we can say with Francis Quarles:

> "Lord, *mail* my heart with faith, and be my shield,
> And though a world confront me, I'll not yield."

But it is objected again that to withhold fellowship from those whom we believe to be Christians, is uncharitable, and is calculated to rend the Church of Christ. To this I answer, that so far from being uncharitable to rebuke sin in this way, it is the very requisition of Christian charity itself, which reads, Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but (as *in* love and *out* of love, and truest charity) thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Thy very charity towards thy sinning neighbor should lead thee to rebuke him.

And so far from its *rending* the Church to withhold fellowship from those portions or individuals of it that practise and tolerate slavery, it is the very way to *unite* and save it. By the sin of slavery tolerated, nourished, and defended by the Church, unrebuked by its Missionary Boards, left in peace by its Tract Societies, our Christianity itself has come into contempt, and American Protestantism (as the affectionate remonstrance of the French Christians to the Churches of America on the subject of Slavery truly declares) has become a scandal.

Now, to remove that scandal, we *must* protest against sin. And how can we do it so effectively, how indeed at all, except by withholding fellowship from those who are practising it? Hitherto the Church of God in America is far from having fulfilled its mission in the matter of slavery. It has had a work to do in the overthrow of that dreadful iniquity which it has shamefully ignored and neglected. How keen the unmeant satire of the venerable Humboldt, in view of the relation of Christian proprietors in America to slavery, when he says: "In our days it is philosophers, and not devotees, who raise the question—Is it right to hold slaves? But the broader range which philosophy has always had makes me believe it would have been better for suffering humanity, *if this sort of skepticism had been preserved among the believers.*"

Now can we doubt that if the churches will not hear and heed the cry of the oppressed, God will raise up other agencies for their deliverance? Indeed, He is already doing it; and He may, in the process of deliverance, crimson the land with blood, through the acts of pro-slavery politicians and Presidents, and the decrees of our Judiciary, consummated successively with guilty silence on the part of the Church, upon the plea that while slavery is a sin, it is also a political institution, and the most we can therefore do as a Church or a Tract Society is to generalize very piously about the moral duties of masters growing out of its existence.

In this guilty silence of his churches and ministers, God may employ the so-called infidelity of Parker, or the alleged violence of Garrison, and the fury of reformers out of the Church, stigmatized as fanatical, to do that which His own people refuse to perform. And he may crush some of the dearest present organizations and instrumentalities of the Church under the weight of their sins of omission, and their refusing to remember them that are in bonds as bound with them. Any way, God the Almighty will destroy slavery, and if we, his ministers and people, will not wield the battle-axe of his word against it, we had better stand from under.

"It has been to me (says one) a most affecting illustration of God's providence, that He has employed the talents of infidel writers, from the deistical Jefferson, to the bold infidelity of Theodore Parker, in the work of emancipation, and that too, with signal success. Jehu executed God's judgments upon the house of Ahab, and he had his temporal reward, but he took no heed to walk in the ways of God. Garrison and his associates are sending a cry through the land, which ought to have swelled from the hill-

tops of our Zion, and they are fulfilling the work of the Church, while, at the same time, they scourge and deride that Church, whose members go up to her Sabbaths, her solemn feasts, and her holy places of communion, with garments dipped with blood. I say it with unspeakable grief, but with the most solemn conviction of its truth, that the attitude of the American Church, in regard to slavery, has thrown a stumbling-block in the way, over which numbers have plunged into hopeless infidelity." *

But it is objected, again, that slavery is not necessarily a sin, *per se*, and to hold, as a principle, no fellowship with slaveholders, is not warranted by reason or the Scriptures. The reasonableness and scripturalness of such a course we have already argued at sufficient length, and it would be enough to say here that under this weakest and most idealess metaphysical subterfuge of *crimen per se*, or *delictum per se*, many hide from themselves the enormity of slavery.

But I meet the objection directly, by saying that slavery or slaveholding is a sin *per se*, as murder is sin *per se*, as theft is sin *per se*. There may be cases of *apparent* slaveholding, in which there is no sin *per se*, because there is no real slavery, inasmuch as the apparent slaveholder, acknowledging that he can not, in the sight of God, hold property in man, is really an emancipator, only subject to the relation of slaveholder in the eye of the law, while he is seeking to place those called his slaves under the protection of the laws of freedom, and fully endow them with all the liberties which he acknowledges are theirs by right.

So there are cases of apparent murder and theft, which are not sins *per se*, because they are not sins at all, the alleged murderer or thief being only so in the eye of the law, but not in the view of God. Yet who for that stumbles at the question, Whether murder and theft are sins *per se*? or hesitates to condemn those crimes as they deserve? A man may be a nominal slaveholder for the moment, from necessity, and yet be guiltless before God of the crime of slaveholding. So a murderer, in the judgment of man, may be acquitted at the bar of God. In both these cases a false judgment exists. There is neither slaveholding nor murder in either case.

But when a man kills another from malice, it is murder, and that murder is sin *per se*. So when a man holds slaves for gain or service to himself, without wages, it is essential injustice and fraud, and that slaveholding is sin *per se*.

* Slavery and the Church: Two Letters to N. L. Rice, D.D. By Smectymnus. Boston: 1856.

He who holds slaves for his own gain, as his property, to increase his own wealth thereby, or in any way to promote his own selfish and personal ends, he is as truly guilty of injustice, and of sin *per se*, as if he were a convicted and common thief, and he is all the more guilty because the rights of which he robs the slave are so much more precious than gold, or than any other property that can be stolen. Yet a single act of common robbery dooms the thief to the State prison, while a system and series of protracted robberies and actual deprivation of the inalienable rights of man, is justified and defended, has the fellowship of the Church, and is no bar to honor and respectability in so-called Christian society.

This ought not so to be, for sin is sin, and right is right, independently of times, judgments, and opinions, or the number and moral weight of the sinners, or the popularity and power of the sin.* And the Church of Christ, and its ministers, above all other men, are solemnly bound to say so. It is the unwillingness of Christian men in the Church, and of doctors of divinity, so to stigmatize American Slavery, and to affirm, as the ground of all anti-slavery action, its inherent and unalterable sinfulness, that has shorn them of all their power in the warfare with this gigantic wrong, and has hitherto kept by far the most important reform of the age out of the hands of the Church. Nothing can be done effectively for the overthrow of this towering wickedness, till the absolute sinfulness of slavery be asserted as the only reason for meddling with it at all in the Church, or by any of its organizations, like the Tract Society or Board of Missions. All attempts to abolish or pare away the difference between Right and Wrong, between Christ and Belial, or to split a distinction where there is not a difference between common morality and reformatory morality, or to compromise with the system of slavery by withholding an expression of its inherent sinfulness, will end in utter defeat and ignominy to the compromising party, while on the other hand, a present failure, on the broad and sure ground of principle, will be a future success. It is a remark of Hardcastle, that God does not allow us to part with an inch of his ground, though we might thereby gain the peaceful possession of all the rest—a maxim which some of the non-committal and compromising doc-

* In a Fast Day Sermon by Dr. Leonard Bacon, there occurs this passage: "The man, whoever he may be, whatever titles he may bear, whatever may be his honors in the State or Church, who by affirming the rightfulness of slavery, confounds the moral sense, and subverts all moral distinctions—I denounce as a criminal against our common humanity, and wittingly or unwittingly an enemy of Christ."

tors of the day would do well to study in its bearings upon slavery.

But we hear it objected again to the refusal of Church-fellowship to supporters of slavery, that it is siding with the fierce fanaticism and denunciatory temper of a godless party outside the Church, and that we do not make allowance enough for our Southern brethren, born and reared in slavery.

This objection has two parts to it. To the first we reply that it has been mainly on account of the blamable neglect of duty by the ministry and the Church, that the party of humanity outside the Church has become so strong. It is to the shame of the Church, that the foremost men in some of our philanthropic movements, in the interpretation of the spirit of the age, in the practical applications of Christianity, in the reformation of abuses, in the vindication of the rights of man, are men who make no profession of Christianity, and whom the Church does not acknowledge as having experienced its power.

The Church has tamely left not merely the working-oar, but the very rudder and reins of certain necessary reforms of the day in the hands of men, who, if not before inimical to the organizations of Christianity, are in danger of being made so by the current Christianity's neglect of what it is its proper mission to look after. They are doing practically, with all their might, for humanity's sake, what the Church ought to be doing every where as heartily, through its ministry and representative men, for Christ's sake. And what will become of our religious organizations when irreligious men get ahead of the Church in morals, and in the practical work of Christianity?* In some instances they are already a

* While there is advantage, there is also danger from the reäction of Christianized sensibility upon Christianity. Alas for the Church, when men not religious, by force of nature, or the tendency of the age, are found in advance of the Church in the true exemplification of Christianity. A writer in the *North British Review* truly remarks that Christianity in our times has done much more *to refine the sentiments of nations, than to reform their morals.* "The wide diffusion of a purified Christianity on the surface of society, and the indirect influence of the refinement of tastes which results from it, especially among the cultivated classes, is generating infidelity and pantheism among us silently, but to a great extent. Two hundred years ago, the great truths of the Gospel beat strong in the trunk-arteries; but had not sent fine feelings and a fine complexion to the surface of man's moral nature But now the result of the expected and desired diffusion of Christianity in highly civilized countries, under its present aspect of a mild, purifying, but powerless influence, is an antagonist reaction from Christianized sensibility upon Christianity itself; and which must bring about, unless the course of things be early arrested, the substitution, silently, of a Christianized pantheism."

long ways ahead of the very oracles of orthodoxy. We might specify individuals and journals in this country that are far before the recognized organs and exponents of the Church, in the advocacy of righteousness and liberty. It is easy to see how much more, both of disgrace and of danger, there is in a fact like this, than there is in the objected siding of the Church with an alleged godless party outside of it. The Church should be wherever and with whomsoever the truth is, humanity is, and virtual Christianity is. We should not even love Christianity before and above the truth, but only as it is the truth, and because it is the truth. He, says Coleridge, who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity; and end in loving himself better than all.

As to the second part of the objection, it is so put as to imply that our brethren in the South, born and reared under Slavery, are better able to judge of the right and wrong of it than we are, who are separated from it. As if a man must be a sinner in the very act, in order to have the truest discernment of what is sinful. Or as if it were sinning in a matter that made one a better judge of its sinfulness, than being without sin in the matter: an argument which would make Satan, with his long experience in wrong-doing only, a more a suitable judge of right and wrong, than Gabriel, with his long experience in doing right only.

What sensible man would admit such reasoning on any other subject a moment? And yet it is not in the least more justifiable on the subject of slavery, the nature and effects of which on slave, holders are such, that they can not be in a fit state to judge of its moral bearings, until they come out from it, and are set free from its inevitable perversions and biases. We need to throw off, or in some way to get unloosed from the meshes of our own error and sophistry, before we can unravel its entanglements, or find out how they came to be wound around us.

Hence it is that we at the North, disconnected for the most part personally with slavery, and somewhat removed from the immediate sphere of its depraving influence, are better able to judge of the right and wrong of the system, are in a better state for the weighing of argument and evidence, and applying to slavery the test of the Bible, than it is possible for our Southern pro-slavery brethren to be. We owe it therefore, to them as a duty, to do out utmost, by calm moral argumentation, by protest, by admonition and rebuke, and finally by the withdrawment of our fellowship as Christians, to convince them of the wrongfulness of their

position and practice, and if possible, as possible it certainly is, to reach the Southern conscience, if there be one, or to make a conscience upon the subject of slavery where it is wanting, by the continued reiteration of the law of God, and the principles of eternal justice.

Our brethren at the South, perhaps I may say Southern society throughout, are just now in the state of passengers who have been spending a long night on the Sound, in the vitiated cabin-air of one of our steamboats. They feel restless, languid, feverish, and ill at ease with their slavery, and yet they know not why. But let them come up on deck, into the breezy morning air of liberty, let them snuff awhile the invigorating breath of freedom, and then let them attempt to go down again into the foul atmosphere of slavery, where they worried through the night, and they will quickly learn what made them so uneasy.

And yet, forsooth, the South still below there under the hatches of slavery, will call to us upon deck that their air is as good as ours; and while inhaling at every breath the noxious gases and exhalations that have become so natural to them that they like them, they will gravely contend that they are better able to judge of the moral bearings of slavery than we are who do not know what slavery is, because we have not been born and bred in it.

But are we of the North to concede for a moment that the air of Slavery is as good as that of Freedom? By no means. Rather let us keep pumping into the exhausted and feculent atmosphere of the South and its apostate Church, the vital oxygen of moral truth, by our continued act and testimony against slavery. As an expression of this, we would advocate the adoption, by Associations of Ministers and by General Conferences, of a preamble and resolutions for substance like these:

Whereas, The American Church South, as represented in the ecclesiastical bodies of the various denominations, have, with the exception of some small bodies of Christians, plainly become apostate from the faith of the fathers, and from the teachings of God's word in reference to the great moral wrong of slavery, therefore

Resolved, That we, as representing a part of the American Church, are solemnly bound to rebuke our apostate brethren of the South in love, by that precept of the Divine Word which says: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

Resolved, That, as a proof of our love, and as a divinely-ordained and Christian method of correction, we will withhold from them the ordinary signs of Christian fellowship, till they repent, and

return to the faith of the fathers, and to the word of God, upon the great practical question of the rights of man, and the duty of the Church to them that are in bonds.

And we would recommend to each individual Church North, to take ecclesiastical action in shape as follows:

Whereas, It is the solemn duty of those who claim to be followers of Christ and members of his Church, to make an uncompromising application of the principles of the Gospel to all sin, and especially to enforce a rigid Christian discipline against the unchristian practice of slaveholding, and whatever gives its sanction to the wicked slave-system, therefore

Resolved, That no slaveholder shall be allowed to be a member of this Church, or to participate in its communion; and that this Church hereby refuses fellowship with any Church or Religious Body that tolerates and defends slavery, and refuses to bring its discipline to bear against so heinous a sin.